

**Meeting Minutes
City of Medina Parks and Recreation Commission
May 17, 2004**

Present: Chair Joseph Brazen, Vice-Chair Heija Nunn, Lisa Fleischman, Connie Gerlitz, Tim O'Brien, Susannah Stuart, and Steve Brustkern

Staff Present: Public Works Director Shel Jahn and Recording Secretary Carol Wedlund

Chair Brazen called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. and welcomed new Commission member Steve Brustkern.

Announcements / Discussion

Public Works Director Jahn noted several letters from residents were being provided to each member which were not in the meeting read ahead packets. Vice Chair Nunn stated the dog control ordinance was under consideration at the City Council level.

Approval of April 19, 2004 Minutes

Commissioner Gerlitz moved, seconded by Vice Chair Nunn, to approve the minutes of April 19, 2004, which were unanimously approved.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Chair Brazen opened the meeting to audience participation for non-agenda items at 7:13 p.m.

Lucius Biglow, Jr., 2425 Evergreen Point Road, requested clarification of the draft cover memo regarding dogs that had been mentioned in the April 19, 2004 minutes. Chair Brazen explained the Commission had discussed the memo during that meeting after which the final memo had been forwarded to the Council for consideration. Public Works Director Jahn added he had been directed to make a draft of the memo for the April 19 PRC meeting which was then reviewed and some modifications made. Mr. Biglow stated he had not received a meeting notice, otherwise he would have been present at the April 19 meeting.

Chair Brazen closed the public participation for non-agenda items portion of the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

PARK UPDATES

Park Updates – Vice Chair Nunn commented Lake Lane and Lake Lane Dock looked beautiful. Public Works Director Jahn stated Asplundh Tree Service was supplying the chips from the 84th Ave NE tree trimming project to the city and the Public Works crew was utilizing the chips at various locations around the city. Vice Chair Nunn noted a group of older boys had brought lounge chairs to Fairweather Park and smoked in the woods.

Public Works Director Jahn announced EarthCorps had worked in Fairweather Park and Nature Preserve about a month and a half ago to perform invasive plant removal and general Preserve maintenance. He noted that the number of times EarthCorps would be in the Preserve this summer would be reduced by about a third due to a reduced funding level provided for by the City Council in the 2004 budget. Commission member Gerlitz requested that EarthCorps needed to remove more of the invasive ivy from Fairweather Park and Nature Preserve.

Public Works Director Jahn also stated more planting would be done along the Indian Trail south of NE 24th Street. He reported that two citizens who ran along the Indian Trail had noted that the gravel surface provided a better running surface than the intended wood chip surface. He inquired whether the Commission preferred chips or gravel on the trail surface. Commissioner Gerlitz did not think it sounded like an Indian Trail with gravel and noted that the Public Works crew members had complained in the past about gravel meandering into the mowing areas. She also stated that placing edging along the path as had been done in the past at Medina Park had been expensive, and did not keep gravel on the paths. Commissioner Gerlitz stated that she did not want the Indian Trail edged. Public Works Director Jahn stated metal stripping in Medina Park in the level areas did a fairly good job of containing the gravel, however, the edging was not nearly as effective on a sloping pathway.

Commissioner Fleischman noted the willow tree in Medina Park which had fallen over due to bank erosion was currently propped up. Public Works Director Jahn stated the Public Works crew might be able to get two trees out of the one tree as there were two distinct root bulbs. The tree was going to be moved and replanted.

Chair Brazen explained to Commissioner Brustkern he would be assigned a primary and a secondary park for oversight responsibilities, and would report on their condition at the monthly meetings. Public Works Director Jahn added that when the responsibilities were decided a couple of meetings ago, the new Commissioner filling position No. 7 (Commissioner Brustkern) would have primary responsibility for the Medina Beach Park and his secondary responsibility would be for Fairweather Park and Nature Preserve.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on Proposed Changes to Medina Parks Ordinance Regarding Dog Controls in Medina Park – Chair Brazen announced he had been unable to attend the May 10, 2004 City Council meeting when the subject of the proposed ordinance relative to dog controls in Medina Park had been discussed. Commissioner Gerlitz provided an update, as she had attended the meeting and had made the presentation of the Park Commission's ordinance change proposal to the City Council. She relayed that the Council had decided to consider the Commission's recommended proposal. During the meeting, several citizens had provided their opinions regarding the proposed changes. She suggested the Commission attend the public hearing which the City Council would be scheduling in the future to hear the issue. She also recommended Commissioners spend more time at Medina Park to observe the many problems and challenges being reported. She stated that whether or not the Council would do a citizen survey was yet to be determined. Chair Brazen explained to the fairly large audience in attendance that tonight's Park Commission meeting was not a public hearing on the proposed ordinance. Further, the action taken by the Commission was a recommendation to the City Council to consider the recommended code changes and the decision of whether or not to accept the Park Commission's proposal was now in the City Council's hands. Given that several citizens were present for the Park Commission meeting and wanted to comment on the proposed ordinance, the Commission agreed to allow citizen comments.

Chair Brazen opened the meeting to public participation at 7:37 p.m.

At the request of Chair Brazen, Public Works Director Jahn provided some background information prior to opening the meeting up to public comment. Director Jahn noted that there had been reports from families who wanted to use the park but were not free to due to off leash dogs frightening small children. He also noted that there had been reported some incidents of dog biting. Public Works Director Jahn also noted that over the years the Public Works crew probably received more feedback than anyone else and was a very reliable source for what really goes on or doesn't go on in the park. He stated that the Public Works crew had been required to place additional vegetation around the southern pond as part of a permitting requirement a few years back associated with work in the outflow stream and upgrading the weir. Director Jahn stated that the Public Works crew had reported quite a bit of damage occurring in the park by the off leash dogs, especially to the vegetation and banks around the southern pond. The Public Works crew had actually installed four gravel ramps so dogs could avoid the vegetation, however, many dog owners were not directing their dogs to use the ramps and were allowing them to enter the pond through the planted vegetation. Additionally, dogs were actually chewing on cattails and other vegetation and essentially killing it. The Public Works crew had also observed a steady erosion along the pond's bank over the years which they noted could really only be attributed to dogs entering and exiting the pond. The Commission's proposal to the Council was to continue to allow dogs throughout the park, but to limit the off leash area to the eastern portion of the park with the stream being the dividing line. Dogs would be allowed in the western portion of the park but only on a leash and on the established paths.

Lucius Biglow, Jr., 2425 Evergreen Point Road, indicated his respect for Public Works Director Jahn. He used the park every day, and the Public Works crew was doing a wonderful job. He relayed that Hyde Park in London had the same problem around ponds in the past, and had installed attractive fencing around its ponds. He stated that there had originally been a plan in Medina to fence the ponds. Mr. Biglow noted that In 1989 there was a controversy over the dogs, which was carried in the newspapers. He hoped that could be avoided now. Mr. Biglow urged cooperation rather than an adversarial situation. He had examined the April 28, 2004 memo carefully. He stated that he would regret having to put his dogs on a leash. Mr. Biglow reported he regularly picked up trash and dog feces in the park. He also believed canine owners were ready to enforce dog regulations more so now than in the past. Mr. Biglow referred to a document called the Development of Medina Park prepared by a Boy Scout for an Eagle Scout project, which Public Works Director Jahn had provided him as well as every Park Commission Commissioner. On page 26 of the document, he noted that a detailed survey had been conducted by the Park Board in 1989. Mr. Biglow suggested this be done again. He also recommended regulating off-leash use by season so when children, picnickers and non-canine owners were usually not present, dogs could roam the entire park off leash.

Linda Brixie, 4442 109th Place NE, Kirkland, reported having been excited to find Medina Park, as there were not many dog parks in the area. She had actually experienced children inciting and growling at her dogs. Ms. Brixie suggested fencing off the children's area by the tennis courts to make it a safe place to play. Ms. Brixie also recommended adding more play equipment, as the play area currently had only two swings and a small slide.

Tom Bacher, 918 Sunset Way, Bellevue, reported having lived 22 years in Medina prior to moving to Bellevue. As a dog owner, he had visited the park every day for the last 30 years. His dog had been attacked by another dog only once. He was aware of only one injury when his wife had fallen and broke her hip. Mr. Bacher agreed the new grass had been chewed up by dogs. However, he did not agree with Public Work Director Jahn's assessment of what was causing the damage. He stated that part of the problem in the Park was due to poor drainage. He also noted that half of the year it was raining and no one was picnicking in the park. He had gathered the 1989 Park Board meeting minutes and had also met with Medina's Police Chief. There had been no formal complaints regarding dog bites since Chief Chen had assumed that position, except for the past week when a dog owner had reported a dog bite to the Police Department. Mr. Bacher emphasized dog owners were just as much interested in enforcing the rules as anyone else. He did not want this controversy to become a public press issue, but rather one without the press. He thought the city had passed Ordinance No. 488, amended to Ordinance No. 489, regarding no leashes in the park. Mr. Bacher also emphasized that the \$11,000 cost for mutt mitts per year amounted to 100,000 bags, which did not make sense to him. He suggested a patrol car should be parked at Medina Park more often for better enforcement. Mr. Bacher reported picking up dog feces all the time in Medina's streets. Mr. Bacher suggested the Commission read his memo of May 14, 2004 and take his suggestions seriously. He stressed Medina would receive a lot of bad publicity from dogs being required to be on leashes in the park.

Leslie Hager, 8909 NE 16th Street, Clyde Hill, announced she was one of the park's most frequent visitors with her dog, and would be disappointed if there were a change in the rules. She suggested a survey be done after six months under the new rules to determine whether the park appearance had improved. She and others picked up litter and feces in the park. She also stated that her presence also kept young people from smoking there. She stated that she did not think the majority of the community would walk on paths with their dogs. Ms. Hager also suggested the dog ramp use should be supported by a geological survey. She recalled the dog bite incident, when a citizen's dog attacked her daughter in the play area. The dog did not bite her and did not push her down. She had reported it to the Police Department, who she believed had told the dog owner that he had lost his park usage. Ms. Hager inquired which Commissioners owned dogs and their experiences in the park.

Commissioner O'Brien indicated his experiences had been both good and bad. He emphasized the Commission was not taking away privileges, but was just asking for some compromise by all park users to allow use of the park by all citizens. He stated that had a young daughter and a couple of dogs, and the Commission was not against canines.

Chair Brazen stated he owned two dogs and the Commissioners all loved dogs. However, many people had commented they did not use the park due to the canines running free. A couple of years ago, the Park Board had fought for grass and sprinklers. Many people were against that, but now they liked the results. He noted many people in Medina were offended by the term "dog park".

Julie Brooks, 8918 NE 24th Street, Clyde Hill, reported having used the park for 13 years with three different dogs. She noted that during most of the year, only die-hards with dogs used Medina Park. She emphasized citizens loved their dogs, and their pets loved the park.

As a Medina resident since 1965, **David McGrath, 8305 Overlake Drive West**, emphasized Medina Park was a people park and not a dog park. He had no objection to dogs walking on the paths. Mr. McGrath thought people were more likely to pick up their dogs' feces if the pets were on a leash and on the path. He stressed Medina Park was becoming only a dog park. Mr. McGrath suggested regulating the canines rather than separating the park into two distinct areas. He emphasized people did not have to bring their dogs to Medina Park. Further, dogs should not run wild. He suggested enforcing the Medina leash law ordinance. Further, dogs did not pay taxes, but people did.

Janice Huseby, 9427 NE 20th Street, Clyde Hill, stated her family enjoyed the park, and it was a large part of their lives. There was a lot of social interaction at Medina Park, as it served as a meeting place for people with dogs. She noted that the Public Works crew members were extraordinary. They had done wonders with the park. She did not object to what the Commission had proposed. She was unwilling to support exclusive use by Medina residents only. Ms. Huseby stated many day-trippers brought their dogs to the park, and there was a corps of park users who were not represented at this meeting. She also wanted transient use in that park to be addressed. Ms. Huseby inquired about who paid for the park.

Public Works Director Jahn stated the original park property purchase was made around the early 60's from five different property owners. The cost of all parcels was \$80,000 and was funded by both city and grant money (\$24,000 from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development with support from US Senator Warren Magnuson). He also noted that Medina's revenues came primarily from city property taxes and sales taxes and that

all of the resources needed to maintain the park came from the Medina City budget and the upkeep was done by Medina's Public Works crew. The city did not receive any county or other resources to maintain the park.

Vice Chair Nunn stated it was not an issue of who could or could not use the park. Medina wanted to make it appealing to everyone, including dog owners. No one was striving to keep visitors from other areas out of Medina Park. Vice Chair Nunn noted she had reservations about dog walkers and dog trainers keeping dogs under voice control.

Commissioner Gerlitz stated the dog problem had been ongoing since she had become a Park Board member several years ago. She receives calls about problems with dogs in the park all of the time. She speculated that when the public hearing is held, there would be several people testifying that they wanted stricter controls put on the dogs. She added the Commission was only an advisory body and had already given their recommendation to the City Council. She also noted that the city was trying to come up with a compromise that served all of the people who wished to use the park and also protected the park. Further, she spent a lot of time in Medina Park and so knew the issues first-hand.

As a three-year Medina resident, **Amy Roberts, 2420 Evergreen Point Road**, pushed a stroller in the park every day. Her daughter loved the dogs. She suggested signage should be put up stating dogs should enter and exit the ponds via the ramps. She noted the sense of community in the park, as people met there.

Jessie Sites, 860 – 82nd Avenue NE, emphasized it was a privilege to have dogs off-leash in the Park. She had used it daily for four years, and had seen no negative interaction between canines and people, and negligible between dog and dog. She picked up a lot more litter than dog feces. Ms. Sites emphasized people were pretty good about policing their pets. She stated that even if the proposed ordinance were adopted, it would be difficult to enforce. She did not see how things would change. Ms. Sites stressed if canines were kept to one area, it would be easy to blame everything on them. It was not just about the dogs. She had made many friends at the park, and it was about the people. She feared if changes were implemented, it would be the beginning of the end.

As a Medina resident since 1965, **Elizabeth McGrath, 8305 Overlake Drive West**, did not feel the park was a social place, as she did not own a canine. She was offended by the dog situation. Ms. McGrath emphasized other communities had leash laws.

Karen Johnson, 9620 NE 25th Street, Clyde Hill, met a group of people at the park every afternoon. She suggested a group of dog owners meet with staff to help resolve the situation. Ms. Johnson thought many people would be willing to help the Police Department with enforcement, but needed a little help getting organized.

Vice Chair Nunn stated that she felt a lot of dog incidents were not reported due to politeness. She suggested compromise and to think about the situation from the children's viewpoint as well. She also emphasized the audience should think about why everyone referred to Medina Park as the "dog park" and not by what the real name is, Medina Park.

Susan Goodnight, 12927 SE 7th Place, Bellevue, thought anti-dog people were more likely to serve on the Commission. She owned a canine and put him on a leash, but believed dogs on leashes did not get along as well. Ms. Goodnight stated the brochures in the park had been copied from a Seattle website.

As an eastside native and a dog owner, **Michael Chamberlain, 1430 – 102nd Avenue NE, Bellevue**, visited the park as often as possible, and loved to have his dog off leash. If off-leash canines were quarantined to a certain area of the park, it would increase the concentration of dogs there. He suggested if the dog ordinance passed, the city should have a plan in place to ensure input from the canine owners, who were really the ones maintaining the dog park. Mr. Chamberlain stated the dog area in Marymoor Park was separated by a split rail fence. He suggested King County would be willing to share their experiences with Medina regarding Marymoor Park.

Katlin, a young girl, stated she owned a dog named Toby. Her mother had had taken her and a friend to the park, and her friend was now less afraid of dogs as a result of visiting Medina Park.

A long-time Medina resident, **Anne Demitriades, 2254 Evergreen Point Road**, asked Vice Chair Nunn if she wanted a play area in the park for larger children. Vice Chair Nunn responded affirmatively. Ms. Demitriades thought pretty soon it would be a park that was not free-flowing. She believed there would be a problem with fences and dogs. Vice Chair Nunn thought both small and large dogs, as well as small and large children should be able to coexist in the Park. She had suggested an additional play structure for children over five years of age.

Dan Newell, 2623 Evergreen Point Road, stated he and his wife enjoyed having the park available for dogs but under voice control.

Chair Brazen closed the meeting to public participation at 8:59 p.m. A recess was taken at 8:59 p.m. and the meeting reconvened at 9:05 p.m.

Chair Brazen summarized 15 people had spoken tonight, eight from Bellevue and seven Medina residents. Some of the speakers who did not live in Medina had been very vocal. Vice Chair Nunn suggested non-residents lobby their own cities to open up off leash areas in their parks. Commissioner Fleischman suggested any implementation of the new ordinance should not be "cold turkey".

Mayor Mary Odermat stated she had seen people taking Medina's dog mitts. Vice Chair Nunn volunteered to check on the possibility of donated mitts. Mayor Odermat suggested tiered dog licensing fees for non-Medina residents who used the park.

Chair Brazen stated the Council would likely hold a public hearing in a larger facility. He noted the Commission had unanimously made their suggestion to the Council regarding regulating canines in the park. He also suggested dog slings might be banned to keep better control of the dogs.

Update on Proposed Changes to New Parks and Recreation Commission Ordinance No. 771 – Public Works Director Jahn explained the City Council had directed staff to prepare an updated version of Ordinance No. 771, changing the name from Parks and Recreation Commission back to Park Board. (Note—This becomes effective five days after publication.) The City Council had also decided not to change the existing MMC language regarding membership removal as had been requested by the Park Commission. Under Duties and Responsibilities in the ordinance, the City Council had removed the words "and direction".

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of New Guidance from City Council Regarding Advisory Bodies Developed During Council Retreat – Quarterly Written Report – Public Works Director Jahn reported the City Council decided to require the Park Commission to provide them with an established work plan at the beginning of each year and with a written report on the work plan once per quarter.

Retreat—Chair Brazen suggested a retreat planning session at his home, 3204 Evergreen Point Road, on June 16, 2004 from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., which met with unanimous approval. He stated the dog situation would not be discussed. Public Works Director Jahn stated it would have to be considered a public meeting and must be posted as such.

Discussion of Parks and Recreation Commission Rules and Regulations – Public Works Director Jahn inquired about the previous rules and regulations for review and possible adoption. Vice Chair Nunn displayed a Park Board guidebook. She suggested the Commission adopt whatever the Council had as its procedural guidance. Chair Brazen suggested this issue be tabled pending further clarification.

Discussion of Big Toy Presentation – Public Works Director Jahn stated a vendor wished to make a Big Toy presentation to the Commission. Vice Chair Nunn stated it would be appropriate to obtain this information for Medina Elementary. She had some preliminary information on costs for structures. Public Works Director Jahn suggested this issue be discussed at the retreat planning meeting.

Annual Work Plan -- Strategic Planning / Vision – Short and Long Range Parks Commission Goals/Objectives and Budgeting – Public Works Director Jahn had old park plans laid out on two tables, and the Commission gathered around as he explained park plans and histories and what had been proposed. He noted that he would bring some of the various plans to the planning meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting – The next Parks and Recreation Commission meeting was scheduled at 7:00 p.m. on June 21, 2004.

Adjournment – By common consent, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Minutes taken by

Caroll P. Wedlund
Recording Secretary